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Mr. Douglas Eldridge
Newark Evening News
Newark, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Eldridge:

The recent tragic events in Newark leads me to write this to you. This is in no way an effort to blow my own horn but to point out that the authorities both in Newark and in Trenton were well aware of the powder-keg upon which they were sitting. I quote myself extensively, but primarily to indicate that information was widely disseminated on the subject of potential violence in Newark.

When Professor Blumrosen and I (both at Rutgers University School of Law in 1964) completed our study of the New Jersey Division of Civil Rights, I concluded my portion of the report with the following:

"...What we do find...is a small, hardcore group of potentially lawless people (17% of the sample) correlated with negative attitudes towards lawyers, judges and the Division on Civil Rights. This small group tends to reject any and all culturally sanctioned remedial agencies including political parties, Negro action groups, and legal personnel. They substantiate, instead, either a desire to 'fight back' to obtain their rights or concede that their rights cannot be obtained within any present frame of reference....They do not represent any organized group.... they are a group only by virtue of statistics....they represent a large number of unorganized Negroes who are in an anomic state as a result of historic circumstances, their rebellion against law and legal process is

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not a positive desire for change, so much as it is a negative reaction to a hostile environment. 'Their lawlessness'...has not as yet been channelized into a force capable of directing hostile manifestations. The aimlessness of this group is perhaps the saddest finding in the entire study, and we implore legislative bodies and all other ameliorating agencies and personnel to direct their energies in the direction of this group before purposelessness dissipates and a violently belligerent agency reconstructs the direction of the anger in this group."

In the Rutgers Law Review, Winter, 1965, I summarized the situation as follows:

"...The substitution of the desire to 'fight back' or the belief that the situation is hopeless is suggestive of anomie, a state of nomlessness in which desired ends are attained not by planning, but rather by spastic and formless acts. If this is so, then the great danger present in this set of attitudes is that some force, as yet not evolved in the Negro community, may come into being which may possibly crystallize the spastic hostility and formless apathy into a cohesive antagonistic force, bent upon self-destruction."

The above report (Blumrosen and Zeitz) was given wide circulation; Sidney Reitmann, Chairman of the Commission on Civil Rights released it; the report emanated from the office of Mr. Sills, attorney general of the state of New Jersey; you among other reporters wrote several articles based upon our findings.

This, however, was not the end of the story. Professor Blumrosen and I continued our inquiries into the condition of life in Newark. In the summer of 1965, at the height of agitation for a Police Review, Mr. James Threatt of the Newark Human Rights Commission requested that I release some of our findings pertaining to this issue. On August 13, 1965, I offered my "Report to Human Relations Commission, Newark" which said in part:

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"The overall conclusions to be drawn from the above are that the Negroes, predominantly poor, are cynical about their power, as individual voters; tend to turn towards politicians for 'favors' and extra-legal help; support the Democratic party and the incumbents, Governor Hughes and Mayor Addonizio; at the same time significant numbers are apathetic about political parties and significant numbers also support Negro mayoral candidates [note that Mr. Gibson's number of votes was no surprise to me]; generally support the police but at the same time substantial numbers conceive of them as brutal. All this suggests that approximately one-fifth of the Negro population has as yet been untouched by social, political, legal and economic remediation."

Thus in both 1964 and 1965, warnings were issued that approximately 20% of the Negroes were potentially explosive because they had been by-passed in general socio-cultural terms. These warnings had to be known in Newark and in Trenton, and certainly other voices were clamoring as well. I can only suggest that in politicians' eyes, an 80% majority represents "consensus," hence, there is no further need to ameliorate and significantly improve the lot of the 20% minority. My bitterness is directed not solely at the men in Trenton and Newark; it is also directed at that majority of 80% who blithely chose to ignore the hurricane warnings, who closed their eyes to human misery, who in effect, commanded their political leaders to play at ostriches.

Sincerely,



Leonard Zeitz
Research Sociologist

LZ/jvj

- Leonard Zeitz -
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- N.Y. - 39 - m. 2 yrs HUS -